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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 003051

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: USAU: AU DEPUTY COMMISSIONER ON PIRACY, SOMALIA,
MAURITANIA, EASTERN CONGO

REF: ADDIS ABABA 3027

Classified By: Ambassador John A. Simon, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: African Union Deputy Commissioner Erastus Mwencha told Ambassador on November 5 that African states are mobilizing to combat piracy along their coasts. Mwencha indicated that the AU and AU member states would likely support the renewal of UNSCR 1816. Addressing the crisis in Somalia, Mwencha called for international and regional organizations to devote resources needed to create conditions of stability and combat terrorism. On Mauritania, he revealed that the AU Commissioner had received a member of the junta to discuss restoring constitutional rule, but the junta's proposal was "not serious." Mwencha also said the AU leadership is engaged in planning for a Summit on the DRC possibly as early as November 7. End Summary.

Fighting Piracy

¶2. (C) In a meeting with AU Deputy Commissioner Mwencha, the Ambassador urged the AU to strongly support renewal of UNSCR 1816, which is set to expire on December 2. He also underscored the importance of AU member states becoming a party to, and then implementing, the 1988 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA). He did not anticipate any problems with renewing UNSCR 1816 as it "does not go against our interests." Mwencha agreed that piracy and maritime security are important issues for AU members states, adding that they know how much is at stake. Over the long-term, the Ambassador noted, revenues from licensing fishing and other uses of maritime waters could more than pay for anti-piracy and anti-drug trafficking activities. The Ambassador also asked Mwencha to consider what role the AU court in Arusha could play in prosecuting pirates in the future. Mwencha discussed the issue with his aides at the meeting, concluding that this is a worthwhile avenue to explore for the future, though it might require changing the court's mandate and is beyond the court's capacity at the moment.

Somalia

¶3. (C) Mwencha gave a somber assessment of developments in Somalia. He warned that if the AU, UN, IGAD, and international partners did not find the necessary resources to address the Somali crisis, terrorism and piracy would flourish in the Horn and that, in turn, could have dire regional and global repercussions. Among the critical needs Mwencha cited was equipment for the promised additional Ugandan and Burundian battalions to be deployed to Somalia. At the recent IGAD meeting in Nairobi that Mwencha attended,

the AU committed itself to working with the UN and IGAD to collaborate in solving the Somali crisis rather than trying to address it alone. However, IGAD's leaders were keen about the AU assuming a leadership role, he said. Mwencha further emphasized that the AU is seeking to secure Somalia's peace and security so that economic development and other programs can be pursued there.

¶4. (C) Mwencha confirmed that the AU orchestrated pledging conference, originally conceived for November, has been postponed until the January-February timeframe (See Reftel).

¶5. (C) Somalia was also one of the topics that the Ambassador raised in a separate November 5 meeting with El Ghassim Wane, who heads the AU Commission's Conflict Management Division. Wane confirmed that a pledging conference was forthcoming and that Italy had committed \$2.5 million to enhance the Somali public service sector.

Mauritania

¶6. (C) Turning to the issue of restoring Mauritania's democratically elected government, Mwencha confirmed that one of the instigators of the coup d'etat in Mauritania had traveled to Addis Ababa to meet with AU Commissioner Jean Ping on November 4 to convey a proposal (Reftel). "It was not a serious proposal," Mwencha said, adding that the junta was "trying to buy space and time." The junta had invited Commissioner Ping to Nouakchott, but Ping declined so as not to legitimize the coup leaders in any way. The Ambassador applauded the AU for its strong stand against the coup and

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its efforts to maintain a united international front.

¶7. (C) In their separate meeting, Wane urged the United States to speak to Arab countries, including Morocco, about the situation in Mauritania. Wane opined that the United States could be more influential with them than the AU on the Mauritanian issue. The AU meetings on Mauritania are scheduled to take place on November 10 in Addis.

Eastern Congo

¶8. (C) Mwencha also informed the Ambassador that a November 7 summit on the Democratic Republic of Congo was not confirmed and that Chairman Ping was "on standby." He noted that UNSYG Ban Ki-moon had named former Nigerian head of state Olusegun Obasanjo as a special envoy to defuse the crisis in eastern Congo, and that the AU had appointed Ibrahima Fall as its emissary to eastern Congo. (Note: Fall will be a "one-time emissary" whereas Martin Bongo will continue to serve as the AU's special representative to the DRC just as he has for the past decade. End note.)(FYI: On November 6 USAU was informed that Chairman Ping and Commissioner Lamamra had departed for Nairobi for the DRC Summit. END FYI)
YAMAMOTO